

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE – AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE

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Mr. Ronald Thomas, President  
McNeil Security, Inc. – McNeil Technologies, Inc.  
Mr. Michael Broida, Site Manager (Greater Rochester International Airport)  
McNeil Security, Inc.  
6564 Loisdale Court, Suite 800  
Springfield, Virginia 22150

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Committee.

McNeil Security, Incorporated is a subsidiary of McNeil Technologies, Incorporated. McNeil Security was awarded a contract with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to provide security-screening services at the Greater Rochester International Airport (ROC) in Rochester, New York. The Rochester Airport is a large category II airport and one of the five designated “pilot-program” (PP-5) airports.

All of the screeners employed at Rochester were selected using the same process and requirements as those airports with federal screeners. The basic training, provided by Lockheed-Martin and Boeing, was identical to that given to federal screeners. The same on-the-job training requirements and testing processes leading to certification were also used. This is also true of annual re-certification requirements. One of the differences, however, was our ability to choose our Supervisors based upon interviews, past experience and other factors. We were not limited to designating Supervisors based solely on test results from the NCS Pearson administered assessment process. We have expanded on that by instituting a promotional process that provides our employees with a career path. Promotions are based upon background, overall performance and candidate interviews. Our formal yearly evaluation process is an integral part of the promotional system.

Staffing requirements for the passenger checkpoints and checked baggage screening areas are set by TSA. McNeil Security began operations in November 2002 with a mix of full-time and part-time personnel. This has allowed us to deploy staff in an efficient manner by synchronizing staffing levels with airline scheduling. Daily operations are monitored by TSA Screening Managers.

McNeil Security Supervisors and Lead Screeners are assigned duties in addition to their TSA-mandated functions, for example, training, supply procurement, scheduling and information management. This has not only enhanced the development of our supervisors but also helped foster the teamwork between TSA and McNeil Security. We have also implemented focus groups comprising screeners. One of the focus groups presented a plan for the selectee screening process that was accepted and implemented by TSA. Another focus group is working with airport administration and TSA to design a new checked baggage screening area. All levels of our workforce are encouraged to be creative and make suggestions through the Employee Advisory Committee and weekly staff meetings. An employee suggestion led to the creation of a professionally produced, TSA-approved video that is played at the passenger checkpoints to help passengers understand the process, thereby increasing speed and efficiency.

We have been able to implement training programs in addition to those provided by TSA. These programs, approved by TSA, have included a nationally recognized customer service program, demonstrations by a local law enforcement bomb squad and a joint TSA/McNeil Security training program to implement a revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). One of our Supervisor Training Facilitators developed a series of crossword puzzles as a training tool. The puzzle's clues are taken from key areas of the SOP and serve to help screeners incorporate important procedures in a unique manner. This method also does not require a formal training venue or time period because screeners can work the puzzle during slower periods and during breaks. These forms are controlled by the supervisors.

McNeil Security has recognized that formal training is not enough. The checkpoint SOP alone contains 18 chapters in more than 150 pages of specific and often complex procedures. Physical search techniques, X-ray image analysis and other procedures demand frequent practice to maintain proficiency and efficiency. More than 90% of our screeners are dual-certified in passenger and checked baggage screening. The Rochester team developed a unique scheduling system that rotates dual-certified screeners on a regular basis. This helps to ensure that screeners maintain peak skill levels in all areas.

Screener retention is a critical issue. A stable workforce is a real cost savings and contributes to operational efficiency and effectiveness. There is no question that screener experience and frequent exercise of the skills required lead to reduced wait times, more efficient and more effective screening. Screeners who are satisfied and can visualize a positive future are more efficient, dedicated and motivated. Our promotional system is one reason our attrition rate is less than 10%, far below the national average. Another reason is that the Site Manager has been empowered to make decisions that affect employees' concerns. This enables us to institute rapid changes when needed without a complex bureaucratic process.

McNeil Security developed and implemented a Passenger Comment form shortly after beginning operations. The form provides for both positive and negative feedback. We have received hundreds of positive comments, including one from an Israeli Army officer lauding our screeners' thoroughness and skill. McNeil Security also instituted a complaint investigation process for the purpose of identifying issues and solving them. A key component is contacting the complainants to advise them of the outcome of the investigation of their complaint, usually within 48 hours. We have found that passengers are very impressed with the personal attention and rapid response to their concerns.

McNeil Security, with the support of the TSA, the Rochester Airport administration and the airlines, has developed a responsive, effective and efficient security operation. This program is a success story that should be strongly supported as a win-win solution for airport security. The regulatory responsibility of the local TSA staff, working in partnership with the private security contractor, is a model that works to keep our nation's airports safe, secure and efficient.